



A Confederation of the Salish,  
Upper Pend d'Oreilles  
and Kootenai Tribes

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES  
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION

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SENATE FINANCE & CLAIMS

Exhibit No. 12

Date 3-18-11

Bill No. HB 2



A People of Vision

TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James Steele Jr. – Chairman  
E.T. "Bud" Moran – Vice Chair  
Steve Lozar – Secretary  
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March 17, 2010

**Senate Finance and Claims**

Helena, Mt.

Dear Honorable Chairman Dave Lewis, Vice Chairman Rick Ripley and  
Vice Chairman David Wanzenried:

**RE: Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Statement on proposed  
Health and Human Services (HHS) Budget Reductions - HB 2**

This letter is written to address the serious issues with the proposed Health  
and Human Services budget and program reductions.

We will first address the issues related to reductions in health care and  
then comment on proposed reductions in the Social Services area.

**Health Concerns:**

In general, Indian people have higher health risks and poor health. Many  
of our Tribal members do not have regular physicians nor do they routinely  
seek regular (non-emergency) health care.

As the health care services are redefined, more Indian people are  
disenfranchised from the health care continuum. As a result, their overall  
health condition declines and access to routine (non-specialized) care  
declines.

Any change in Medicaid services and payments has a detrimental  
impact on Indian people and poor people in general. There are many  
individuals in Montana who qualify for Medicaid services and who need it.

Montana citizens deserve the support of the state in providing base line health care. Absent state support, many services (any payments) fall back to the Tribes without necessary reimbursement. Or, the service is provided and the local physicians and hospitals, like the Tribes "eat" the cost.

As services and payments change, our ability to guide and refer a patient for care becomes more complex.

### **Potential Social Services Impacts:**

In review, the proposed social services reductions will have a devastating impact on the children in care and on the care providers. The foster care system is a fragile system serving the most vulnerable - children without parents.

To lose the clothing allowance for children in care (CFDS 95304) will only further ostracize those children. Children (and care giving families) will have less financial resources and as a result, will look further out of place.

These funds do not provide for "luxury items". They are used for necessities and basic care items. The Tribes will not be able to replace these funds. All foster care children will suffer with this action.

To reduce the medical subsidy for children placed in adoptions will be devastating. Many times these children have high medical needs.

Adoptive families will be less willing to take on a child with special needs if these services are discontinued. This action can promote extended foster care - no adoptions (CFDS 95302).

To use a real life example, a male Tribal child was taken into foster care at eight (8) hours old. His mother gave birth and left him at the hospital. She did receive any pre-natal care during her pregnancy.

The child was placed into foster care and due to considerable drug and alcohol use by his mother; he was physically unable to hold his formula down. His muscle tone was so weak he could not hold food down, nor could he crawl, nor stand, nor walk. His feet and legs did not have enough strength to hold his thin body up.

This child needed physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy for a three year period before he was able to overcome the impacts of his mother's drug addictions.

To lose the medical subsidy for adoptions is to deny medical services to children, like the one described above. This affects Indians and non-Indians alike.

All over Montana, children through no fault of their own, enter life with huge physical and emotional challenges. To deny the medical subsidy for adoptions is to prolong the barriers. This is another area that results in a medical cost shift to Tribal Health.

The proposed CFSD 95303 reduces foster care operating expenses to a level that will cause hardships to children, families and the providers in the system. Workers will have less training and less resources. These proposed cuts will dismantle the system of care and the workers who have faithfully served the State.

In our opinion, the **liability** of the State of Montana will increase as the foster care funds that serve fragile families decrease. The state accepts responsibility for the **CARE** of the children and the **CARE** should be at a level we provide to our own families and children.

Before voting on any reduction ask yourself – would I do that to my child? Would I do that to my niece or nephew, if they were in need of services.

These are your children – they are Montana's children. The social services reductions need to be reconsidered and full funding restored.

Any reduction that reduces medical care to needy and deserving Montana citizens needs to be reconsidered.

### **Healthy Montana Kids (formerly CHIPS)**

In preparing the statement to address the devastating cuts in HB 2, it feels like the legislature is out of touch with the needs of all Montana citizens.

Again, any reduction to the Healthy Montana Kids Program will impact families and children who are barely surviving.

This program assists individuals who are working and who are trying. **To reduce a program that works for working families and children is disappointing.**

### **LIHEAP Funding**

On February 10<sup>th</sup> we understand that the committee voted to not accept federal funding for LIHEAP.

This reduces the funding available to all poor people and people who are waiting for the economy to rebound. This again impacts those who need your leadership and financial support the most.

Many of you return to a warm house each night. Many of you are able to pay your utility bill. HB 2 harms families who are not as fortunate.

### **Montana's Veterans**

I understand HB 2 and the committee recommendations would send vouchers to Veterans instead of having them served in established Veterans homes.

You are changing the way our most treasured citizens are being served. You are breaking promises to those who have risked life and limb to protect us. This needs to be reconsidered.

Honor the promises to those who served this country and this state with honor and distinction, including the many many Tribal members who served in the military.

In summary, the proposed HB 2 reductions are not needed as the money to provide the services to needy people is there. The proposed reductions are irresponsible.

The proposed reductions impact health care providers, persons seeking health care, clothing for needy children, medical support for adoptive children, veterans access to health care, special needs children, heating assistance for low income people and the employees who serve foster care providers and children who are left by their families.

The people who elected you are being hurt. Over half of the State of Montana survives at or below the poverty level.

Your proposed actions will negatively impact those most vulnerable - women, children, children with special needs, elders, Veterans and working families.

Please restore full funding all areas of HB 2 and in particular, those areas of the Health and Human Services budget.

Sincerely,



E.T. "Bud" Moran, Chairman  
Tribal Council

Chairman's communication and copies to the following:

Senator Debby Barrett  
Senator John Brenden  
Senator Taylor Brown  
Senator Edward Buttrey  
Senator Mary Caferro  
Senator Steve Gallus  
Senator Brad Hamlett  
Senator Bob Hawks  
Senator Llew Jones  
Senator Jim Keane  
Senator Alan Olson  
Senator Jason Priest  
Senator Jon Sonju  
Senator Edward Walker  
Senator Carol Williams  
Senator Ryan Zinke